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Minutes of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs

January 20, 2003

Marriott Grand Hotel, Moscow, Russian Federation

****Moscow minutes****

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Representing the U.S. Side:

Congressman Sam Johnson

Co-Chairman, American Side, Korean War Working Group (KWWG)
U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)

Mr. Norman Kass

Executive Secretary, USRJC
Senior Director, Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD)

Mr. Cody Lusk

Chief of Staff for Congressman Johnson

Mr. Roger Schumacher

Director, JCSD

Mr. Yuri Boguslavsky

Chief, JCSD-Moscow

Major Robert Smith, USAF

Chief, World War II Working Group

Captain Matt Dimmick, USA
Garmisch Intern

MSgt David Hasenauer, USAF
Analyst and Lead Podolsk Researcher, KWWG

TSgt Thomas Shipp, USAF
Analyst, Vietnam War Working Group (VWWG)

Ms. Svetlana Amvrosova
Interpreter/Translator

Representing the Russian Side:

General Major (ret) Vladimir Antonovich Zolotarev
Co-Chairman, Russian Side, USRJC

General Colonel (ret) Vladimir Fedorovich Korochkin
Chairman, United Union of Veterans of War and Military Service of the Air Forces of Russia

General Major Konstantin Viktorovich Golumbovskij
Deputy Co-Chairman, Russian Side, USRJC

Colonel (ret) Aleksandr Semenovich Orlov
Co-Chairman, Russian Side, KWWG

Ms. Natal'ya Mikhajlovna Levina
Executive Secretary, Russian Side, USRJC

Colonel Sergej Aleksandrovich Il'yenkov
Director of Archival Services
General Staff of the Armed Forces, Russian Federation (RF)

Mr. Vladimir Ivanovich Krasovchik
Archives Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs

Colonel Sergej Ivanovich Chuvashin
Director, RF MoD Central Archives

Ms. Irina Nikolaevna Pushkareva
Lead Archivist, RF MoD Central Archives

Mr. Igor Plotnikov
Russian Side, USRJC

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Opening Statements

General Zolotarev opened the meeting with a warm welcome to Congressman Johnson. Zolotarev expressed his appreciation for the Congressman's efforts and recognized him as the originator of this activity (a charter member) of the USRJC. Zolotarev then introduced the new Chief of Archival Services of the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense, Colonel Sergej Aleksandrovich Il'enkov.

Zolotarev presented Congressman Johnson with coins that were minted in honor of the 300-year anniversary of the

Russian Navy. One depicts Peter the Great and the other the Russian victory in the Sea of Azov. Zolotarev wished the Congressman health, happiness, and prosperity. Zolotarev said that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War and that we should commemorate this date. He added that after Congressman Johnson's comments, he would like to allow Colonel Orlov to start the session's discussion.

Congressman Johnson thanked Zolotarev and expressed his appreciation to the entire Russian Side for coming to the session. The Congressman noted that it has been several years since his last visit to Moscow, and he is glad the trip had been postponed since it was currently warmer in Moscow than in Washington DC. Congressman Johnson noticed all the good changes in Moscow since his last trip – beautifully restored old buildings, much new construction, the hustle and bustle of a vibrant city on well-lit streets, contrasting it to the dim gray Moscow that he remembered seeing in 1992. Congressman Johnson then presented General Zolotarev with a token of friendship and thanks and agreed to give the floor to Colonel Orlov.

Colonel Orlov cordially greeted Congressman Johnson, Zolotarev, and all present. He began by mentioning that in the course of the 10 years of the existence of the KWWG, there has been significant progress. He remembered that the KWWG was initially the most problematic and had the lion's share of difficulties within the USRJC. Since those early days, the KWWG has helped to clarify the fates of 140 out of the 249 U.S. aviators who did not return from the war in Korea, he said. Progress also had been made in clarifying the fates of Russian pilots. We have clarified the fate of more than 60 Russian pilots, Orlov said, and added that with American assistance, the Russian Side has clarified the fate of seven pilots from the list of 23 pilots; we need to find out the fate of the remaining 16 pilots. The vital work of the KWWG continues, and with the help of the U.S. Side and the personal involvement of Congressman Johnson, we were able to access the Podolsk archives, he said.

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Korean War Working Group Issues

Orlov noted that Russian efforts continue to discover information about MiG-15 aircraft that were captured by the USAF during the war. The April 1951 incident has been clarified with U.S. help, however, there is one more incident that demands more information – the MiG-15 captured in the summer of 1951. Orlov also felt it was important to emphasize that this year—2003—marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. It will be a year of note and will be commemorated in books and television programs.

Orlov mentioned that one book he had worked on would be published soon. The book in part relates to Generals Korochkin and Zolotarev and their visit to Nellis AFB, Nevada, in 2001, during which time they met with U.S. veterans of the Korean War. He added that the Russian Side still has warm feelings about that meeting, and they would also like to commemorate the end of the war this year. Orlov said the KWWG continues to identify search group members to interview.

In closing Orlov stressed that since the USRJC is a public humanitarian organization, we need more exposure to the mass media in the U.S. and Russia. He said that two years ago, the Commission wrote a joint report for our respective presidents, and there have been press interviews with Zolotarev and other members of the Russian Side of the Commission. All of these have been published in the press in Russia. He mentioned that the U.S. is not brushing aside these issues either, and last November General Lajoie gave him (Orlov) two articles from the same author (Ralph Wetterhahn). Orlov understood that America is a free country and any person can state his opinion, but he added that the Russian Side would like the U.S. Side to ensure the Commission's point of view is expressed in the press.

Congressman Johnson thanked Orlov for his words and commented that he was glad to see another pilot in the crowd; he greeted General Korochkin, adding that there exists a certain camaraderie between pilots that perhaps cannot be understood by all. Johnson said that he was delighted to see the archival services of the MoD and MVD represented at the meeting. The Congressman noted that, in America, we cannot pressure the press. He said we can only present the information, and the mass media can use it as they want.

Congressman Johnson stated that the first order of business should be to discuss the Korean War documents held in the Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense (TsAMO), adding that the U.S. Side is still waiting for a report from

TsAMO about work with classified documents, as stated in a letter from General Zolotarev in the year 2002. Congressman Johnson inquired about the status of the report.

Zolotarev thanked Congressman Johnson for his introductory words and informed him that the chief of the Podolsk archives, Colonel Chuvashin, was present at the meeting and he could discuss this issue.

Colonel Chuvashin informed the Congressman that work on the documents held at TsAMO had started in 1997, and American specialists have been working there since then. The Russian Side has provided its most experienced personnel to assist in the research. He added that some preliminary work had been accomplished prior to the declassification of some of the documents from the 64th Fighter Aviation Corps and its subordinate units. In the course of this work, Russian researchers extracted documents that indicated information regarding the fate of American pilots or air crashes during the Korean War. These documents were provided to the U.S. Side. In February of 2002, the U.S. Side presented a list of 42 files of the 64th Fighter Aviation Corps that it wanted declassified. In its effort to satisfy this request, TsAMO was able to ascertain that 18 files (dela) do not contain any information on air crashes or the fate of aircrew members and, therefore, have not been declassified. Pages found to be relevant to our issue in eighteen other files have been declassified, leaving six files expected to be declassified shortly. Unfortunately, there have been personnel changes, and the Russian Side was not able to complete the work on time. In conclusion, Colonel Chuvashin said that the work to clarify the fate of U.S. pilots in the archival holdings at Podolsk continues. He thanked Congressman Johnson and the U.S. Side for the six computers that were provided to TsAMO by the United States.

Congressman Johnson stated that the U.S. Side feels that some of those dela may still contain information that could be useful in resolving loss incidents. Johnson said that the U.S. Side's June 2002 letter asked the Russian Side to take another look at the 24 dela that were mentioned already today. Congressman Johnson then added that the U.S. Side had prepared a letter listing an additional 104 dela that are of interest to the U.S. Side. The Congressman then handed the letter to General Zolotarev. He told the General that the numbers differ from those that were discussed, since, as the General had indicated, the Russian Side was looking at 6 additional files. The Congressman told Zolotarev that, in researching these letters, the Russian Side hopefully would consider sharing more information about missing U.S. aviators. Congressman Johnson added that it would seem appropriate for the two presidents to look at declassifying Korean War and Vietnam War documents. This would be very helpful in clarifying the fates of missing pilots.

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Presidential Support of the Commission

Zolotarev indicated that it was important that the presidents of both Russia and the United States reaffirm their commitment to the work of the Joint Commission, and hopefully Presidents Bush and Putin will come to an agreement that the Joint Commission is doing important work.

General Zolotarev mentioned that President Putin had seen the last joint report on the Commission's work and asked if President George W. Bush had also seen it. Congressman Johnson said he doubted that President Bush had read the entire report but was certain that the President was briefed on its content.

General Zolotarev suggested that the Commission should consider writing a new document for the new presidents to sign in order give impulse to the continuing efforts of the Commission. Congressman Johnson agreed that the suggestion was valid, and it may be easier to do now that the U.S. Congress is under the control of the same party. He will brief the Speaker of the House on this matter when he returns to Washington.

Congressman Johnson noted that, with Senator Smith's departure from the Commission, the group is going to have to find a new representative from the Senate to become active in Commission work. He reminded the Russian Side that there are one or two inactive members on the American Side.

Congressman Johnson again thanked the Russian Side for bringing its archivists to the meeting and asked if they could give him an indication as to when they might be able to review the archives and let the U.S. Side know if they are able to provide any more information. Zolotarev indicated that the work is already completed and would be provided during the Congressman's stay. He also said that the new boss of Archival Services (referring here to Colonel Il'yenkov) will

prepare all the necessary documents.

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Central Archives, Interior Ministry

General Zolotarev then introduced Vladimir Ivanovich Krasovchik as the representative from the Interior Ministry (MVD).

Mr. Krasovchik said that within the confines of a presidential decree, MVD archivists are looking for information on POW/MIAs and interned persons. He said the search is ongoing in the MVD's Central and local archives throughout the Russian Federation. The search began in 1998 and, in accordance with the list provided by the U.S. Side, the MVD has looked for information about the fates of missing Americans. Unfortunately, the search did not yield a positive result because the list provided by the American Side did not contain complete information, such as full name, date of birth, place of birth, etc. He said that the MVD Central Archives do not contain any information about U.S. citizens.

Congressman Johnson asked what war Krasovchik was referring to, and Krasovchik said his remark referred to names from the period of the Korean War. He said that the U.S. provided the information; that he has provided the information to the local archives, and that they are starting to work on this issue. He also reminded the group that it was a slow process, and, if he could receive more detailed information on these people, then he could conduct more fruitful searches. Congressman Johnson confirmed that the U.S. Side would do what it could and asked if members of the U.S. Side could work with Krasovchik's people to prevent these types of problems in the future. Krasovchik responded in the affirmative, and he noted that he is ready to conduct joint work anywhere, any time, but first he had to figure out where the needed information is located.

Congressman Johnson said the U.S. Side has indications that some U.S. servicemen were moved into Russia during the Korean and Vietnam wars. He said we have not been able to uncover any evidence from the Russian Side as to the disposition of these individuals. He said the U.S. Side would appreciate any information on this topic. The Congressman reiterated the desire of the U.S. Side that the Russian Side declassify Vietnam War-era documents, as well as Korean War-era documents, since it has been over thirty years since the Vietnam conflict ended. He said that he is not trying to put blame on anyone. He said that both nations have faults, but it is a different day, and we are working as friends to try and uncover what happened to our servicemen so that families will know and put closure on their losses.

Krasovchik said that he completely supports the U.S. Side in this issue. He stated that he can only speak for the MVD archives that are located on the territory of the Russian Federation, but he is in the process of contacting former Soviet republics in this multi-faceted search. Congressman Johnson thanked Krasovchik.

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Vietnam War Working Group Issues

General Golumbovsky said it was time to turn the focus to Vietnam War MIAs. He said the Russian Side is doing everything possible to resolve all the outstanding MIA issues. He said that there is nothing to confirm reports that Vietnam War MIAs were brought to the USSR. All these years, they have been trying to decipher the Volkogonov phrase about a plan to deliver "knowledgeable Americans." He remarked that some say the plan was to get American pilots and get their information. He said that at the request of the U.S. Side, the Russians have diligently researched this issue without any positive results.

Golumbovsky said that the Podolsk archivists are doing very intensive work studying Vietnam War-related documents. He said the Russian Side gave a list of incidents to the U.S. Side at the last meeting that may be able to help clarify the fates of servicemen. This is in addition to the list provided during the visit of the Russian Side to the U.S. and also when DASD Jennings came to Russia. He then said that they have not found any documents that indicate any U.S. pilots were transferred to the former USSR.

Golumbovsky said that the search for this information is a combined effort. The Russian Side researched the archives and conducted interviews. Golumbovsky noticed there are some people in the current meeting who took part in such interviews, and none of the participants could confirm that Soviet officials interrogated Americans or transferred them to the USSR. He also said that the interviewees all claim that they did not have contact with American pilots. He added that representatives of the Soviet Union were not allowed to have contact with American pilots, visit crash sites, or have even elementary contact.

Congressman Johnson directly contradicted Golumbovsky's claim. The Congressman noted that he was a POW himself in North Vietnam, and he saw Soviets in the POW camps. They were not in direct contact, but they were in the background. He said he did not know if the Russian Side had found these people, but they were there and he could vouch for that fact. He said it was the same in the Korean War, as well. Golumbovsky confirmed that they had discussed these issues, but they had no confirmation. He also said that the representatives of Vietnam and China were in the POW camps. Congressman Johnson confirmed that was true, with Russians in the background. Golumbovsky said that the Chinese had more control over this issue, were anxious to do such things, and forced the Vietnamese to let them do it. Golumbovsky reiterated that the search for materials on this subject is still ongoing, and he hopes that the Podolsk archives will provide useful information in this regard.

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GRU Support to the Commission

Congressman Johnson asked if the Russian Side could take another look at locating and interviewing 13 GRU retired officers who served in Southeast Asia along with searching the GRU archives for information on the 25 MIA Americans from the Korean War who we believe might have been interrogated by Soviet officials. Golumbovsky said the Russian Side is still working on this issue, and they will let the U.S. Side know once they get any results.

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GULAG Study Group Issues

Congressman Johnson asked if the MVD has card files of prisoners in the Gulag system. Krasovchik explained that he could search these files if he has detailed information. Congressman Johnson said that he could give them a list of 1,900 names from the Vietnam conflict to look for if that would be helpful.

General Golumbovsky said that the Russian Side is in contact with Memorial, and he spoke with the head of this organization nine months ago. Zolotarev said they are still waiting for information from this group. Mr. Kass replied that the U.S. side has a research agreement in place with Memorial in Vorkuta. He said that the Congressman's question was broader than Vorkuta, encompassing the entire Gulag system.

Congressman Johnson noted that many of the answers may lie in China, but the Commission cannot go into China directly. He suggested that both the U.S. and Russia could approach China on these issues separately. Golumbovsky added that the Chinese move very slowly on these issues and offered his assistance in working with other Memorial groups throughout Russia.

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World War II Issues

Congressman Johnson brought up the issue of a site survey involving the crash site of World War II American aviator First Lieutenant Richard S. Brevik. He asked if September-October is the optimum time for an excavation. Golumbovsky confirmed that they would plan to conduct a mission on the island similar to the one completed in Petropavlovsk on Mutnovsky. He elaborated by saying the mission will be in two stages. The preliminary stage will be to collect proper documentation and start the proper paperwork to travel to the area. The U.S. Side will then ask, via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for permission to conduct work at the site. The Russian Side, via the Commission, will confirm the timeline, scope of work, and the people involved. After permission is received, both sides will send a

representative (probably in May) to the area to arrange all stages of the operations – arrival, search, transportation, aviation. He said that September to October would be a good time for such work because of weather conditions.

General Golumbovsky said that, during the Kamchatka mission, the Russian Side had problems with payments – the U.S. payments were received about three months after the mission. The RF Side guaranteed everything by honor, and still the U.S. side took two to three months to pay the vendors. If the next excavation is the same, then he will not be able to pay for things such as aviation fuel, etc.

Mr. Kass explained that the Kamchatka mission was an aberration in this regard due to the extraordinary circumstance of a helicopter crash in Vietnam just prior to the excavation. The resulting fallout and safety considerations delayed the operations and payments. Mr. Kass also noted that the Russian Federation had expelled virtually the entire staff of the Joint Commission's Moscow office at this same time, serious impeding support for the excavation mission. He agreed to do everything possible to expedite payment.

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"Master List" of Declassified Korean War Documents

Congressman Johnson then passed a letter to the Russian Side proposing that the American and Russian sides agree on the attached "master list" of unclassified files at the Podolsk archives to which American researchers would be guaranteed routine access. The head of archival services, Colonel Il'yenkov, said he would look into the issue, but he could not promise a quick turnaround. He anticipated the process would take about six months.

Congressman Johnson noted that Colonel Orlov has been working with him for ten years now, and he presented Orlov with a token of friendship. Each side thanked the other for their joint work, and the meeting adjourned for a U.S.-hosted luncheon that followed.

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Visit of Congressman Sam Johnson

January 20 - 22, 2003

Prague, Czech Republic

****Prague Visit****

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Major Robert Smith, USAF

Chief, World War II Working Group

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Prague Introduction

Congressman Johnson visited Prague, the Czech Republic, from 20-22 January 2003. On January 21, 2003, he met at the American Embassy with an element of the Ambassador's "country team," including John Boris (Political Counselor), Gabriel Escobar (Political-Military Officer), Mike Johnson (Deputy Director, Office of Regional Affairs), and Colonel Frank Morgese (Office of the Defense Attaché). After a discussion of current U.S. interests in the Czech Republic, the Congressman began his first meeting with Czech officials.

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Military Intelligence Chief

General Major Jirí Giesl, Director of Military Intelligence, Czech Ministry of Defense, met with Congressman Johnson at the American Embassy, Prague. Congressman Johnson explained the work of the U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs, noting that the American Side of the Commission has expanded its effort into Eastern Europe and, more recently, has reinvigorated its work on World War II losses. He asked General Giesl whether access might be provided for American researchers to interview Czechoslovak attachés who served in Pyongyang and Hanoi during the Korean and Vietnam wars, and whether Czech military archives might hold information of value in America's effort to account for its missing service members.

General Giesl offered to accomplish a review of all reports that the Czech Republic has on the topic of U.S. POWs and provide those that have not been provided to the Commission in the past. He noted that a report was provided for the Defense Minister in 1993, and it is necessary to consider whether important information might have been missed. Giesl said that this effort deserves the highest respect. A search for indications of contacts or interviews with American POWs should begin with a review of documents, he said. Major Smith added that, if possible, original source documents would be helpful.

Congressman Johnson said that he would welcome any information the Czech side might have about its medical personnel working in North Korea during the war. Giesl responded that people who were directly involved in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts, as well as World War II, should be sought out.

Mr. Kass clarified that the Czech citizens with whom we are interested in talking would include, for example, Czechoslovak attachés and personnel involved in observing ceasefires from both the Korean and Vietnam wars. Giesl noted that attachés who might have served in North Korea likely are no longer with us. He reiterated his offer to provide access to documents not yet reviewed by the American Side.

Giesel expressed doubt that the information of Czech General Sejna was credible, and he said that in this case, there was a better opportunity to clarify this issue by interviewing people rather than reviewing documents.

Giesl observed that the following Monday, he will attend a monthly meeting with directors of all Czech intelligence services, the Prime Minister and his deputy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and other high-level Czech officials. Giesl said this would be a good forum in which to request the assistance of these officials. Mr. Kass added that the Congressman would meet with several of these officials, and it would be good if General Giesl would reinforce the need to support this request at his Monday meeting.

Major Smith noted that, in the past, the Czech Interior Ministry had been reluctant to search its archival holdings for information on missing Americans. Information from Interior Ministry documents had come to us through the Office of Documentation and Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (UDV). Giesl responded that the issue in the Czech case is not an absence of political will to help, but rather the lack of a centralized system for approaching this problem. There are different archives under different agencies, and there is no coordination among those agencies, since the Czech Republic does not have an element in its government that focuses on this question, and personnel are constantly changing. Giesl noted by way of example that, while he served in the Czech Embassy in Washington D.C. for seven years, the Czech Republic had seven Defense Ministers.

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First Deputy Minister of Defense

Congressman Johnson met with First Deputy Minister of Defense Jaroslav Škopek at his office in the Defense Ministry. Škopek began the meeting by noting that the Czech Defense Minister asked him to meet with the Congressman, directing him to provide all possible support. Škopek asked what he could do to support the Commission's work.

Congressman Johnson responded that the Commission seeks information on the fate of unaccounted-for American servicemen, including those who may have been transported to the former USSR through Czechoslovakia during Communist times. He noted that the Commission recently has reinvigorated its work on World War II losses, where the U.S. currently carries from 30-78,000 unaccounted for service members. He expressed an interest in interviewing Czechoslovak attachés who served in Pyongyang and Hanoi during those wars and in reviewing Czech archival materials for information on fate of MIA Americans.

Škopek noted that such an effort would require time, and he asked what expectation the American Side had. Congressman Johnson expressed understanding that finding these persons might be difficult, but he promised that the American Side could dispatch analysts to interview these individuals or review archival materials on relatively short notice. We feel a deep obligation to the family members of lost servicemen in this regard, the Congressman noted. He again expressed interest in information about American POWs have been moved through Czechoslovakia to the former USSR, noting that the Russians had not been particularly forthcoming on this topic.

Minister Škopek suggested that a Defense Ministry commission could be established under whose authority Czech officials might perform research on these questions, locate former attachés, and facilitate interviews. The Congressman expressed appreciation for this offer, and Mr. Kass added that what is really needed is an interagency commission, since the records in which the U.S. Side is interested are located in various collections in a number of government ministries. He noted that General Giesl intended to raise this issue at a meeting of government ministers the following Monday. Škopek promised the full support ("100 percent") of the Defense Ministry, but he could not guarantee the support of other agencies. He offered to try to effect this coordination.

Major Smith noted that the U.S. Side had received good cooperation in 1997-99 from the UDV and Czech Military Intelligence. The UDV made reference to documents that can be found in MoD archives, and he passed a list identifying these materials. Smith also said that Czech counter-intelligence provided information from the 1972-73 time frame, and the U.S. Side would be interested in expanding this time frame in the search for more information. Congressman Johnson added his understanding that these records might have been destroyed or taken to the former USSR, but he solicited the Minister's willingness to seek these materials. He also reiterated his request for help in locating Czech citizens to interview. Škopek repeated that the effort might require some time, but he promised to inform the U.S. Side within two months what might be available.

Škopek expressed appreciation for U.S. support to Czechoslovakia following World War II and for NATO membership. He observed that the reform of the Czech military is underway, and the military will try to support the Commission's effort. Congressman Johnson thanked the Minister for Czech support of the U.S. effort on Iraq.

Major Smith told Škopek about the decree in Hungary to local officials to account for American servicemen who perished in that country. He asked if a similar decree might have been issued in Czechoslovakia and, if so, it might be helpful in providing an accounting for U.S. losses in this country.

Škopek noted that this is his first exposure to this issue, and he promised to try to locate more information. He noted that the Czech Republic is small but open. It will hold its second round of presidential elections this Friday, and history will show positive results.

Major Smith said that the Congressman will meet this afternoon with military archivists, and in the past, the U.S. was precluded from examining a collection of documents in a sealed, General Staff archive. Mr. Kass suggested as well that it would be very helpful for the U.S. to have an opportunity to speak directly with Czech veterans' organizations, as well as with officers who served in North Vietnam or North Korea. Mr. Kass asked whether Czechoslovakia operated any hospitals in these war zones. Škopek did not know the answer to this question but promised to find out. He noted that no Czechoslovak military units served in Korea or Vietnam, just individual officers.

The meeting concluded with mutual expressions of gratitude and a gift exchange. Minister of Foreign Affairs Congressman Johnson met Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Cyril Svoboda at the Ministry on 21 January. After initial pleasantries, the Congressman explained the work of the Joint Commission, mentioning specifically the Commission's interest in Czech citizens who may have worked in a hospital in North Korea during the war and our interest in interviewing these individuals. Svoboda acknowledged that a Czech hospital operated in North Korea during the war and the possibility that some Czech citizens who worked there might still be available for interview. He noted that, politically, there are no reservations about helping in this regard. Technically, however, it might be quite difficult to locate such individuals and gain their willingness to submit to an interview. Svoboda promised to work with the U.S. Embassy toward a solution of this issue.

Congressman Johnson noted that the Commission has reinvigorated its World War II effort. The U.S. still counts from 30-78,000 personnel from that conflict unaccounted-for. Svoboda responded that the answers to the fate of Americans who might have died in Czechoslovakia during World War II probably is held by local municipal authorities, who Svoboda believes would be happy to help. He noted that relatively few World War II survivors probably remain, however. The meeting closed with Minister Svoboda acknowledging U.S. support to Czechoslovakia during and after World War II and U.S. efforts to solve Europe's problems. He indicated MFA support to the work of the Joint Commission.

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Ministry of Interior

Congressman Johnson met at the Police Presidium with Deputy President of Police Oldřich Martinů, Director of the Office for Documentation of Investigation of Crimes of Communism (UDV) Irenej Kratochvíl, and Kratochvíl's deputy Pavel Bret. The Congressman began the meeting with a brief description of the work of the Joint Commission and American efforts to account for its missing-in-action service members. The Congressman expressed the interest of the U.S. Side particularly in Pankræ prison, where 90 Americans reportedly had been incarcerated, including a black American.

Martinů responded by noting that he felt honored by the presence in the Police Presidium of an American war hero and distinguished leader—Congressman Johnson. He made general expressions of support for the Commission and a willingness to participate fully in its work in the Czech Republic. He turned the meeting over to UDV Director Kratochvíl.

Mr. Kratochvíl reviewed the support provided in the past to Commission representatives by the UDV. He noted that the UDV had published a 9-volume document reviewing its work investigating the crimes of Communism. The eighth

volume in this set details the allegations of Czech General Sejna and the UDV investigation and conclusions on this issue. The ninth volume in this set discusses the activities of Czechoslovakian military forces in North Korea during the war. Kratochvíl said that the nine volumes had been dispatched to the U.S. Embassy in Prague. Mr. Kratochvíl provided several copies of both volumes.

Kratochvíl said that the American Side last visited Prague in the year 2000. In its work with the American Side, the UDV had not located information upon which a criminal investigation might be launched against any Czech citizen. He explained that the UDV is divided into two parts: one part deals with documents; the other deals with investigations. Both parts of the UDV have been active in support of the Commission, he said.

Kratochvíl noted that, in the course of its work, the UDV must comply with Czech criminal law. That is, for example, if a document or collection of documents is classified, the UDV has not had access to these materials. It can request access to such materials and use the Czech criminal code to ease such access.

Kratochvíl said that the UDV had located one Professor Eiselt, the head of the Czech military medical mission in North Korea. Eiselt was over 90 years old. Personnel from the U.S. Embassy were afforded the opportunity to interview Eiselt, along with one additional person in Moravia who worked in the Czech military medical mission in North Korea. The UDV has a list of Czech citizens who worked in North Korea, but although the UDV can help the U.S. Side locate and approach such individuals, Czech citizens have the right to refuse a request for an interview.

Kratochvíl reminded the Congressman that a Congressional delegation visited Prague in June 1997. As a result of that visit, the Czech Side formed a commission that was headed by the Deputy Minister of Defense. In August 1998, that commission concluded its work, and a report on the results was provided to the U.S. Side. The UDV had been a participant and contributor to this work. In all, 45 Czech citizens were investigated. These included Czech intelligence officers, soldiers, agents, and medical personnel who worked in North Vietnam. Some of these persons refused to answer questions posed to them. All these cases were closed because no proof had been forthcoming about any wrongdoing on the part of these citizens. The August 1998 report included the participation of the Czech Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs Ministries, and the Intelligence Services.

On the subject of Pankrac prison, Kratochvíl said that 25 Czechoslovakian soldiers had deserted from their duty stations in North Korea and were arrested by Korean authorities and handed over to the Soviets. The deserters were taken to Prague and held in Pankrac prison. In the end, the Czech Communist Party intervened, and the deserters were released. The UDV interviewed a number of these persons, asking specifically if they had seen Americans in the prison or in transit. Kratochvíl said there is no proof that American POWs were taken to Prague, and General Sejna's assertions could not be corroborated.

Congressman Johnson asked if Czech citizens are bound by an oath prohibiting them from sharing information from Communist times. Martinu responded that this is, in fact, the case, but the ministry for which the citizen worked can release the citizen from this oath.

In closing, Kratochvíl noted that the archives of the Czech Communist Party had been declassified two years ago. These files are now available for our review, he said, and the UDV is willing to assist Commission researchers in obtaining access to this archive and any other in the Czech Republic.

After an exchange of gifts, the meeting concluded.

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Ministry of Defense Archives

Congressman Johnson visited the Central Archives of the Czech Ministry of Defense on January 21, 2003. He met there with: the archives' Director, Colonel Ing. Jan Konarik; the Deputy Director, Colonel Ing. Radko Capek; Director of the archives' Section I, PhDr. Julius Baláž; and the Director of the archives' Section II, Lt COL. Ing. Jan Kolár.

Colonel Konarik welcomed Congressman Johnson to the archives, introduced his staff, and provided a formal briefing

on the archives (a copy of which was provided on CD).

Congressman Johnson thanks Colonel Konarik for this briefing and explained the work of the Joint Commission in the Czech Republic. He inquired whether the archives hold materials relating to a Czech hospital that reportedly operated in North Korea during the war. Konarik confirmed that such a hospital in fact existed during the Korean War, and documents describing its operations exist in the archive.

Major Smith said that Commission researchers received outstanding support from archivists during previous visits to the Central Archives. He noted, however, that a sealed collection of General Staff materials could not be made available to our researchers, and he asked whether that situation still applied. Colonel Konarik reported that a Ministry of Defense order in August 1999 declassified the archives' entire collection, and therefore, there are no documents in the archives that would be denied to Commission researchers.

Dr. Baláž offered a report on the work previously performed by the Commission in the Central Archives. He said that a significant number of materials already had been examined, much of this work having been performed by UDV researchers. No documents on the subject of American POWs were located thus far, he said. Baláž noted that the personal records of all Czechoslovakian service members who might have served in North Korea or North Vietnam are located in the sister archive of the former Czechoslovakian armed forces in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Major Smith passed a list of documents that the Commission so far has been unable to access. Colonel Konarik confirmed that the Commission should have no problems obtaining access to these materials in the future. He responded in the affirmative when Congressman Johnson asked whether one or two Commission researchers would be welcome to work in the Central Archives. Konarik requested time to prepare for such a visit, but he assured the Congressman that the archives' staff would be happy to work closely with Commission researchers, and he provided a point of contact for such work.

The meeting concluded with best wishes and an exchange of gifts.

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Concluding Business in the Czech Republic

Congressman Johnson discussed the outcome of his meetings in Prague with U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Craig Stapleton, at the Ambassador's office in the embassy. This discussion continued later over a dinner hosted by the Ambassador at his residence.

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Visit of Congressman Sam Johnson

January 20 - 24, 2003

Budapest, Hungary

******Budapest Visit******

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[Dr. Fehér, Administrative State Secretary, Ministry of Defense](#) [Lieutenant Colonel Fekete, Military Intelligence Office](#)

[Dr. Szijj, Director, War History Archives](#) [Mr. Koroknai, Acting Director, Hungarian National Archives](#)

Representing the U.S. Side:

Congressman Sam Johnson

Co-Chairman, American Side, Korean War Working Group (KWWG)
U.S.-Russia Joint Commission on POW/MIAs (USRJC)

Mr. Norman Kass

Executive Secretary, USRJC
Senior Director, Joint Commission Support Directorate (JCSD)

Mr. Cody Lusk

Chief of Staff for Congressman Johnson

Mr. Roger Schumacher

Director, JCSD

Chief Petty Officer Dennis Friedbauer

Hungary Analyst

Major Robert Smith, USAF

Senior Analyst, World War II Working Group

Budapest Introduction

Congressman Johnson visited Budapest, Hungary, from January 22-24, 2003. On January 22, 2003, he met at the American Embassy with an element of the Ambassador's "country team," including: Charge d'Affaires Janet Garvey; Defense Attaché Colonel Bruce Sweeney; Political Affairs Officer Mr. Joseph Beerman; Political-Military Affairs Officer Mr. Keith Mines; and Major Charles V. Rath, Jr., Assistant Air Attaché, Defense Attaché Office. After a discussion of current U.S. interests in Hungary, the Congressman began his first meeting with Hungarian officials.

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Defense

Congressman Johnson met with Deputy State Secretary for Defense Policy József Bali at his office at the Defense Ministry. Mr. Bali discussed at some length Hungarian efforts to reform its military. He described the difficulties that Hungary is experiencing attaining NATO standards, the limitations on Hungarian resources, and the urgent requirement for Hungarian government officials to closely prioritize their objectives.

Congressman Johnson described the work of the Joint Commission in Hungary and solicited Mr. Bali's support of the Commission's work, which Bali offered.

Administrative State Secretary, Ministry of Defense

On January 23, 2003, Congressman Johnson met at the Hungarian Defense Ministry with Administrative State Secretary Dr. József Fehér. Also present on the Hungarian Side were: Chief Counselor Dr. Jolán Szijj, Director, War History Archives; Mr. Akos Koroknai, Acting Director, Hungarian National Archives; Mr. Istvan Vas, Hungarian National Archives; Colonel József Lugosi, Director, Military History Museum; Lieutenant Colonel Istvan Fekete,

Military Intelligence Office, and Colonel (retired) Arpad Szurgyi.

Dr. Fehér opened the session by citing "fruitful cooperation" between Commission representatives and Hungarian Government officials since 1996. Congressman Johnson agreed that Hungarian support to the work of the Commission had been close, but he noted that more information exists in Hungary that has not yet been obtained. He said that Hungarian archives had not yet been fully exploited, military advisors from the Korean and Vietnam wars had not yet been interviewed, and the reports of these individuals and of Hungarian attachés during the war had not yet been reviewed. There also remained the question of the transfer of captured American combat equipment from North Vietnam to Hungary, some of which had been shared by the Hungarians with the Soviets. Congressman Johnson asked for help in obtaining access to these materials.

The Congressman also noted that the Commission has reinvigorated its effort on World War Two. He said that the roster of MIA Americans from this conflict totals around 70,000. Considering the fact that U.S. aircraft crashed in Hungary during the war; that the Soviets reportedly abused and even murdered Americans in this region during and after the war; that POWs were incarcerated here, and that Americans reportedly were transferred through Hungary to the former USSR, there ought to be significantly more information available from Hungarian sources than has so far been received.

The Congressman noted that Hungary provided a large number of its citizens—600, according to U.S. information—to serve on the ICSC (International Commission for Supervision and Control) during the Vietnam War. It would be very helpful to be afforded the opportunity to interview these officials, the Congressman said. He requested that the Minister appoint a Hungarian official to act as a formal "point of contact" for Commission researchers working in Hungary. He closed his remarks by thanking the Minister for Hungary's support of America's war against terrorism and its support of America's position against Iraq.

Dr. Fehér said that a detailed study was carried out in cooperation with the American Side in 1997-98, and he said that, at least, the two sides do not have to begin "from scratch" in the current initiative. He noted that Hungarian archives undoubtedly contain some data on World War II that would be helpful. He expressed uncertainty that Hungarian attaché reporting from North Korea had been shared in the past, but he noted that the Military Intelligence Office would look into this issue. He saw no reason we should not have access to these reports.

Congressman Johnson added that the American Side also is interested in Hungarian personnel who served in hospitals in North Korea and North Vietnam, because, according to American information, Hungarian medical personnel treated Americans. The Commission also would be interested in interviewing Hungarians who were incarcerated in the Gulag.

Fehér said that several Hungarian hospitals operated in North Korea during the war, but he questioned whether personnel who served there would still be alive today. He offered to look into this issue, search archival documents, and seek contact with any surviving personnel who manned these hospitals.

Although few Hungarian veterans from the Korean War may still be alive, Minister Fehér expressed certainty that Hungarians who served on the ICSC are still very much alive, and some of them would have only recently retired from the active military. The Congressman inquired whether the Minister believed they would be willing to talk with the American Side, and Fehér expressed certainty that some of them, at least, would agree to be interviewed.

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Lieutenant Colonel Fekete of the Military Intelligence Office (MIO) said the he had studied the topic (support to the Commission) and concluded that MIO does not possess the documents that are being requested. He said that documents pertaining to the work of the ICSC would be held in the Hungarian Central Archives or the Military History Institute. Many of these documents undoubtedly would have been deemed not worthy of retention, such as documents pertaining to technical management, finance, etc.

Fekete claimed that Hungarian attachés, and files pertaining to their work, would not fall under the MIO. These officials belonged to a special directorate (foreign affairs) in the military. He claimed that the MIO had almost no contact with attachés who served during the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Fekete said that he did not see any obstacle

to American interviews with former military attachés. Fekete closed by claiming that any technical equipment seized by the Hungarians would have been surrendered to the Soviets.

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Dr. Szijj, Director, War History Archives, noted that her office had worked with Commission representative in 1997. She said that Colonel Terry Nelson had returned to Budapest several times, and the archives had conducted much research on his behalf. She said that the archives had found "traces" of American military personnel in documents from the Korean and Vietnam wars, and these materials had been shared fully with the American Side by 1998. On the Korean War, the main holdings of the archive are Korean War memoirs, original documents, excerpts from diaries, and materials that are primarily not of a military nature. The documents that were available were handed over to the Commission in 1997-98. She noted that additional materials would have been under the supervision of the Health Ministry, as that ministry was in charge of the hospitals operating in the Korean theater.

In July 1998, Colonel Nelson was given documents and folders from the Hungarian Peoples' Army from 1973. These materials were classified, Szijj said, but a high-ranking Hungarian general had given permission for Colonel Nelson to review these documents. These documents detailed the work of the Hungarian mission to the ICSC in 1973, working manuals from the Commission, accident reports on helicopter crashes, the work of military delegations, maps of Vietnam, photograph albums, descriptions of military garrisons, etc. Colonel Nelson reviewed these materials, most of which were in the English language. These materials have since been declassified, Szijj said, and it would require a major effort to conduct another review of these documents. That could be accomplished if deemed worthwhile, she said.

Colonel Nelson also reviewed a donation of papers by a Hungarian who served in North Korea and North Vietnam. Nelson actually met with Tibor Heltai, and one of his photographs was correlated to an MIA American pilot from the Vietnam conflict.

On the records of the ICSC, the archives do not have a complete list of the materials pertaining to this organization. The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the responsible agency of the government for this organization. The Hungarian National Archives Act imposes a restriction on Hungarian researchers in the interest of protecting individual privacy and personal information, Szijj observed. She said that her office must first contact these persons and determine their willingness to meet U.S. officials before a meeting could be arranged. She also noted that, up to 1998, there was a Vietnam friendship association that met regularly, and this association might be contacted for further information.

Dr. Szijj noted that there might be one new area of research—that of materiel artifacts—and this would be the purview of the Military History Museum.

Szijj took up the topic of World War II. She said that her personnel had begun an examination of this topic covering the 1945-46 timeframe. She was unable at the current meeting to present their findings, but she noted that documents of interest had been located. These pertained to U.S. soldiers and their equipment, the downing of American aircraft, and the exhumation of American remains. Szijj finished her presentation by saying that there are many documents, and she offered to work with the American Side.

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Mr. Koroknai, Acting Director, Hungarian National Archives, spoke next. He noted that Colonel Nelson had spent one week in October 1998 researching documents in the archive pertaining mainly to the work of the ICSC in North Vietnam. The archive holds Ministry of Foreign Affairs documents, as well. Certain information of interest to the U.S. Side was located, especially from the period 1965-75, but most of these materials are in the Hungarian language, so an interpreter is required for review of these documents, he said. Koroknai also stated that most documents in the Ministry of Health Archives would be in Hungarian so we might require an interpreter while reviewing them.

Mr. Vas, also of the Hungarian National Archives, said the archives had "catered" to American desires, hopefully to the satisfaction of the American Side. American researchers should consider work primarily in three areas, he said:

Council of Ministers' documents; materials from the Prime Minister's office and institutions around that office; and documents belonging to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Vas noted that documents from the MFA contained relevant information, but some remain classified, and MFA permission will be required before the U.S. Side is permitted to examine them. MFA permission had not been sought to date, Vas said, and this remains to be accomplished.

Two issues remain to be tackled, Vas said. First is the need to gain permission to review classified materials, and the second is the need to overcome privacy protections to interview citizens with information of interest to the Commission. Colonel Nelson sought the latter (permission to interview Hungarian citizens), but he was refused, according to Vas. This does not betray a prejudice against American researchers, he said, since Hungarian researchers operate under the same restrictions.

Vas said that little information about U.S. losses in World War II is available. Some data is available among the collections of the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office. Documents about Americans incarcerated as POWs in Hungary during World War II also may be available, but he was uncertain about this, since his area of specialization is post-1945.

Regarding the Korean War, MFA archives should produce some materials of interest from the Hungary embassy in Pyongyang, reports of the ambassador, instructions, etc. Vas said that documents from the Hungarian Health Ministry contain useful information, especially pertaining to Hungarian hospitals in North Korea. These documents would include identification of medical personnel who served, the structure of the organization, and the system of operation.

On the Vietnam War, MFA collections should contain reports from the Hanoi embassy, as well as documents of the Hungarian contingent in the ICSC. These files are voluminous, Vas noted. In 1998, Colonel Nelson was given only a list of available documents, a portion of which had been declassified, while others had been "re-classified." Nelson had a complete list of these materials, and he asked for and was given access to about one-half of them. The remaining documents on the listing either were not asked for or were requested and denied by the MFA. Vas said he believes that the American side decided not to seek access to these materials, since five years have elapsed without a follow-up American request. We might profitably try another request for access to these refused materials if the American Side is so disposed, Vas said.

Vas said that the MFA collection would be the most important for documents on the Soviet Gulag, but these materials mostly pertain to Hungarian citizens who returned from the camps. Vas has no knowledge of documents in this collection pertaining to non-Hungarians in the Gulag. He noted that there is a Hungarian association of Gulag camp survivors.

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Colonel Lugosi, Director, Military History Museum, suggested contacting an association that exists to research aircraft remains from the World War II timeframe. He noted that he (or his museum) has contact with this association. He also noted that local gendarmes would have arrested or assisted downed aircrews, and these gendarmes have their own local newspapers that might contain information about downed American aircrews. Dr. Szijj then cautioned about the accuracy of information in these local newspapers, however, noting that the accounts often were exaggerated.

Lugosi said that his museum holds a large quantity of photographs from the Korean and Vietnam wars. American researchers examined this collection of photographs in 1998, he said. The museum also has numerous artifacts and personal effects, including weapons, such as an M-16 rifle with an inscription in the Vietnamese language boasting about the confiscation of the weapon from an American soldier. These items were not examined during previous visits but are available if American researchers are interested.

Minister Fehér asked what form of work the American Side envisions in Hungary from this point forward. Congressman Johnson responded that the American Side now has an ethnic Hungarian on its staff who already is working in Hungarian archives, and this will make a big difference in what we can hope to accomplish, especially in those collections that are almost exclusively in the Hungarian language. U.S. researchers will be in contact with the officials around the table, and they will work through the American Embassy to gain the cooperation of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in accessing recently declassified and still-classified documents that were not available to us in the

past. Congressman Johnson assured the Minister that the American Side remains interested in Hungary as a source of information about American losses and will actively resume this work in the future.

Fehér closed the meeting by noting that the Hungarian Side offers its top-notch professionals, and he urged the American Side to establish, maintain, and nurture its contacts with them. The American Embassy and Colonel Sweeney (DATT) can be of assistance in this, as well. Fehér offered his help if it is required to cut through the Hungarian bureaucracy.

The meeting concluded with an exchange of gifts and expressions of appreciation from both sides.

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